

The Gretna Chronicles NEWSLETTER



Summer Edition 2008

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Fred Buch

Ever since we have begun work on the new MGAHS headquarters, many of our members have been asking when the facility will be open to the public. And every time I was asked, I had to say "I did not know." A project, such as this, takes time and unexpected problems in the structure take additional time to correct properly. Well, now I am pleased to inform all of you, our members, that there will be a special "Members Only" reception and open house on Saturday June 28th from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM.

The following Saturday, July 5th our facility will be open to the general public for the first time. There will be a Dedication and ribbon cutting at 10:00 AM. The building will be open, following the dedication, until 4:00 PM

Weekend hours, times yet to be determined, will depend on the number of available volunteers. Please come and see what has been done. I know you will be proud to be a member of our organization and will want to bring your friends to see the displays and facilities.

Summer Calendar

Sunday, July 6, 2008 - 2:00 PM -

Campmeeting Tabernacle

The History of the Campmeeting Movement
Presented by Linda Campbell. Co-sponsored with the Mt. Gretna Community Library.

Friday, August 1, 2008 - 7:30 PM -

10th Annual History of Mt. Gretna Presentation "A Tribute to Jack Bitner"

Thursday, August 21, 2008 - 7:30 PM -

Cornwall Manor

The Cornwall Furnace
Presented by Steve Summers of the Cornwall Furnace at Cornwall Manor.

Friday, August 22, 2008 - 7:30 PM -

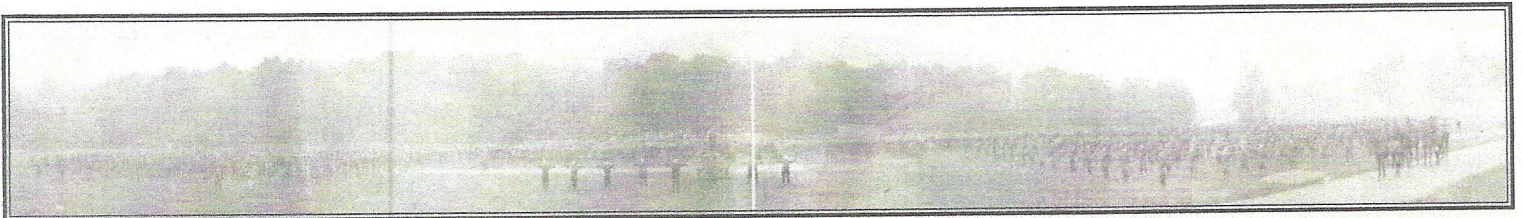
Hall of Philosophy

Mary Feik, WWII B-29 Flight Engineer
A lively discussion of Mary's amazing life.
Co-sponsored with the Pennsylvania Chautauqua Summer Programs.

Friday, August 29, 2008 - 7:30 PM -

Hall of Philosophy

The Union Canal
Presented by W. James Schucker, member of the Lebanon County Historical Society. Jim will present the fascinating history of the Union Canal.
Co-sponsored with the Pennsylvania Chautauqua.



Did you know?

That the Historical Society can help you get one of those stylish and fun "MTG" decals for your vehicle?

The classic oval label, 5.75" x 3.75".
\$3 each or 2 for \$5.



Proceeds benefit the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society and by going to our website www.mtgretnahistory.org) and visiting our online store, you can find out how to get one or several of these "must have" items for the true lover of all things "Gretna." Decals can also be purchased at The Gretna Emporium located beside The Jigger Shop.



The Passing of Friends

The Historical Society recently lost two great friends and supporters. Jack Bitner and Pat Attwood respected the history of Mt. Gretna, and each loved the place in their own special way. Both played important roles in the creation and growth of the Society and will be equally missed by many.

Jack Bitner

(1917-2008)

Born in Harrisburg, son of John Donald Bitner, Sr. and Ethel Daugherty Bitner, Jack, known as "Mr. Mt. Gretna" graduated from the John Harris High School in 1935. He entered the US Army Air Corps at Langley Field, Virginia. Jack left the Air Corps in 1938 and enrolled in aeronautical engineering at the University of Pittsburgh where he was a member and president of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. In his senior year he met his future wife, Jeanine Stephenson, a member of the Delta Delta Delta sorority.

Upon graduation, Jack was commissioned into the Army Air Force and assigned to the Air Force Development Center at Wright Field, Ohio. During WW II, Jack was engaged in the correction of combat aircraft problems and tests of modifications.

After the war, Jack and Jeanine were married and he took employment with Glenn Martin Aircraft Co., in Baltimore, MD. Jack designed several missiles at Martin, one of which was deployed in Germany and Okinawa as an atomic deterrent against Russian aggression during the Cold War. His later career involved managing the development and deployment of several highly classified projects. Upon retirement, he and Jeanine bought a home in Mt. Gretna where the family always had a cottage going back to his grandparents at the first campmeeting in 1892. He published two books on the history of Mt. Gretna, in addition to documenting the history of the Pennsylvania Chautauqua and the Mt. Gretna narrow gauge railroad. He also presented countless lectures for community groups.

Jack is survived by his wife, Jeanine, of Mt. Gretna; son, Robert, husband of Carol Bitner, of Elizabethtown; daughter, Joan, wife of Tom Brown of Marietta; three grandchildren and a great grandson.



Patricia Light Attwood

(1926-2008)

Pat Attwood's passing on April 10 leaves yet another crevice in the widening gap separating us from Mt. Gretna's yesterdays. She and her brother Pete Light, who still lives atop Conewago Hill, were here in the 1930s and 1940s, when snows piled high outside the windows of their parents' cottage at the corner of Princeton and Harvard avenues. Decades later, those cold winters kindled warm memories in stories she liked to tell, linked also to adventures of teenage summers at Midge's stand, with such friends as Nancy Besch, Pat Pinsler, Peg Hicks, Marian Strickler and the "Coyle girls," Nancy and Pat.

She also enjoyed sharing memories spawned by Mt. Gretna pictures she discovered one afternoon when the owner of Harpel's photography shop invited her to sort through long-ago photographs stored in his third-floor attic. She showed them at gatherings of the Winterites and, in more recent years, at talks sponsored by the Mt. Gretna Historical Society.

Feisty, practical and filled with purpose, Pat kept up a lively business practice—faithfully serving insurance clients until only a month or so before she died. What she enjoyed most, however, were grandchildren. At an April 16 Timbers gathering attended by some 75 friends and relatives, nearly every picture of Pat included at least one grandchild on her lap. "Tell me a story about what it was like growing up in Mt. Gretna, Nanna." It was a refrain she heard often. One that brought smiles, joy and lasting satisfaction to the lady who was, and will always be, an integral part of Mt. Gretna's history.



Gretna Music and MGAHS – cozy dinners on the porch in August

Served on the porch of the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society, right next door to the Playhouse, gourmet box dinners will be available before Gretna Music concerts in August. There is limited seating, so call Gretna Music to place your order when you buy your tickets. (717) 361-1508. Each week's menus are artistic expressions themselves –and menus change weekly. Beef tenderloin salad, basil chicken wraps, rice with currants and pistachios, and more! Provided by Leslie Bures of Artful Events.

TIME TO BRING THE MT GRETNAL AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO LIFE – Susan O. Wood, Chair - MGAHS Awareness and Fundraising Committee

In June we are hosting events to introduce people to the new home of the MGAHS. It's a chance for people to see new exhibits and talk about what they want to see happen. Guests bring objects to show, telling stories about their family or cottage. Following are quotes and comments I recorded in my minutes of the meetings. On Tuesday, June 3rd Jeanine Bitner was our host. Stories included:

- Marla Pitt: "Our family has been in many cottages, across generations. (she showed family pictures!) My grandmother was here at age 92. I remember many special people from the past - Jody Williams and Marty Otto in particular."
- Fred Buch: "I have been interest in history for a long time and was a trustee of a museum in Ephrata. After 30 years on that Board, I resigned and came to Mt. Gretna to rest awhile. Met Jack Bitner and saw the results of 40 years of collecting. He asked me to take over the collection and I felt "we've got to rescue this. It's been here for a long time and we owe it to the next generations."
- Peggy O'Neill: "We bought our place in 1983 after my husband discovered it. I say to God everyday - "I'm so glad that your plans for my life include being in Mount Gretna – it is a blessing to live here."
- Linda Wilson: Showed a pin cushion from Hotel Conewago and donated it to MGAHS, along with 3 books from the Chautauqua home reading series. The Wilsons have a photo of their cottage from 1902, found under drawer paper liners. A set of lower dentures were found!

When she told Hilda (former owner), Hilda laughed and said "when Russell and I closed the cottage, he hid his dentures. If I didn't find them, I didn't clean well enough!"

- Rupert Bullard showed a 100 year-old bottle that he found in a digging expedition with Jack Bitner, at the site of a former trash dump.
- Becky Briody: "I worked in New York for five years and one day I was walking past an antique shop and saw a shirt from the "Mount Gretna Roller Rink." It was \$25! I bought it."
- Fred Buch brought out the Springfield rifle donated by Steve Gible – a military rifle used for training here at the encampment.

Others there on June 3rd were Madelaine Gray, Linda Gettle, Pat Gible, Steve Gible, Morris and Pauline Greiner, Lois Hopkins, Bobby Warshaw and Paul Heise, Fred Swarr, Bob Wilson and Dave Wood.

On Saturday, June 7th Morris Greiner hosted, bringing a scrapbook of pictures and postcards. Attendees were Jack and Jane Anderson, Cheryl Enck, John Feather, Karl Gettle, Shawn Harbaugh, Deborah and Jeff Hurst, Dr. Pete Light, Ted Martin, Carol and Tom Mayer, Chris and George Resh and Betsy Rogers. Some of their stories were:

- Becky Briody brought the "Mount Gretna Skating Rink" shirt offering to exhibit it at the museum. Morris Greiner pulled a page from his scrapbook with a newspaper ad for the rink, to go along with the shirt.
- Karl Gettle showed a brick from the Mt Gretna brickyard. He got it on 7th and Maple in Lebanon when the fire hall was torn down. Two pennants are in Karl's collection – one from Hotel Conewago, and another from Mt Gretna, 1911. "Mr. Moody in Lebanon was a great junk guy." When the Mt Gretna Inn was torn down, he got the furniture. I bought two chairs.
- Cheryl Enck: "My husband Paul's grandfather had a house that burned down in the 1949 Campmeeting fire. Twenty-two cottages were destroyed that night. Firefighters from the city and county kept the fire contained on that cold November night."
- Ted Martin brought two pictures of Uneeda Rest Cottage original residents Lydia Troup and Florence Troup Bamberger taken on a long ago 4th of July. Also a newspaper from Sunday, July 18, 1937 that was found between the linoleum and the flooring in the kitchen.
- Fred Buch talked about World War II-era "graffiti" noting that the "Japs are fighting" that he found scribbled in the MGAHS cottage under some plywood.



- George Resh found the original siding under panels in their home. A few years ago a woman came by and asked "Do you own this cottage?" He showed her the marks on the wall in the dining room noting three children's growth. She was one of the children.

- John Feather was a lifeguard for the Otto's in the 1960's and 70's. He has two GUARD shirts. Otto's required that shirt be worn at all times, identifying guards. Pay was 50 cents/hour. Workday was 10 a.m. to evening, 6 days a week. Pete Light commented "the pay was the same 20 years before."

What people say they appreciate most about what has been done already by the Society.

- That the priceless artifacts are so well taken care of in this climate controlled environment.
 - That the MGAHS is in a cottage.
 - The theme of education, and the need for programs.
 - Access to research and study.
 - It will preserve the history for generations to come.
 - Architectural design advice free-of-charge (a list of contractors will be available).
 - Oral histories are being collected.
 - "I'm impressed, very impressed with everything"
- Dr. Pete Light.
- Everything is tastefully done.
 - The location is perfect.

What would you like to see happen here?

- Build a catalogue of cottages, ownership and history, photographs.
- Create a plaque for properly restored cottages.
- It will be good to have people to answer questions and a place to send people to learn about Mt Gretna.
- Renovations of cottages benefit from advice of Architectural experts.
- There will be a place on the web for access across the country.
- Keep an eye to the future, and do more than just reminisce.
- The volunteer part is key! Need people to host and organize programs.

Preparing for the Future

A capital campaign will be launched in July. Called "Somewhere in Time", the campaign will raise \$400,000 to fund the acquisition and improvement of the building and commence public operations. The campaign goal will raise:

- \$200,000 for property acquisition cost (title will transfer to MGAHS in July).

- \$100,000 for building improvements.
- \$100,000 to help endow future operating costs.

We will need your help to launch and sustain this endeavor. I have volunteered to chair the committee. Please contact me if you want to make a contribution, volunteer for a MGAHS activity or attend a briefing. The next briefing is on Monday, June 23 from 5-6:30 p.m. Call if you want to attend. Another briefing will be scheduled in July. Thank you for the warm and enthusiastic response to the MGAHS. Susanowood@comcast.net (717) 964-3069

MT. GRETNA'S ORAL HISTORY

By Jack H. Anderson

Have you ever had a relaxed conversation with a friend or acquaintance and shared a story about Mt. Gretna? Have you shared your knowledge of the history of a cottage, or an event, or an old Mt. Gretna tradition? What was your summer like in Mt. Gretna in times past?

In recent years oral history has emerged as a useful means of recording and preserving the unique memories and life experiences of people whose stories might otherwise have been lost.

Mt. Gretna has touched the lives of many people in so many ways and everyone has stories they can tell. The oral history project of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society offers an opportunity for people to do just that...to tell these stories in a relaxed conversation, and assure that they are preserved as part of the collective memories of Mt. Gretna.

You can help the oral history project in the following ways: (1) suggest persons you think we should interview to collect their oral history; (2) become an oral history interviewee and share your own remembrances; (3) become an oral history interviewer for the Society; or (4) help the oral history project in other ways. Call Jack Anderson, 964-1975.



MT. GRETNA AREA HISTORICAL

SOCIETY BOARD TRUSTEES 2007 - 2008

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BUSINESS MEMBERS

We especially appreciate the support of the following local business firms and ask that you give them your support.

The Jigger Shop

A Summer Tradition since 1895
Mt. Gretna

The Gretna Emporium

Educational Toys and School Supplies
Mt. Gretna

Designer Window Fashions

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Hershey

Mount Gretna Realty

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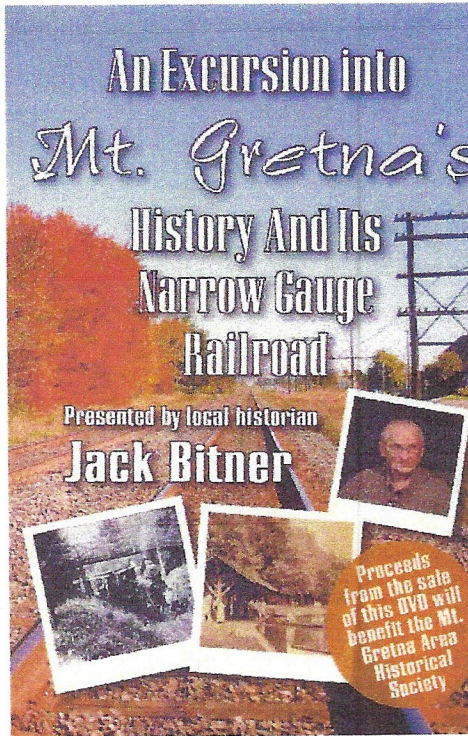
Mt. Gretna's place for dining & entertainment

Mount Gretna Lake and Beach

The place to swim & tan in Mt. Gretna

Thank You!

The Society wishes to thank
all newsletter writers for their
contributions and hard work.



MT. GRETNA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Enjoy Jack Bitner's history of Mt. Gretna on a two DVD boxed set which includes the early history of the Chautaugua and the Narrow Gauge Railroad. The boxed set is only \$29.95. Order today or have it shipped for only \$4.00 more.

ORDER TODAY

Two Disk Boxed Set

\$29.95 x Quantity

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